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Tribunal Pénal
International pour
l'ex-Yougoslavie

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REGISTRY
GREFFE

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ARREST AND TRANSFER OF DARKO MRDA

On Thursday, 13 June 2002, SFOR forces detained Darko Mrda, in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following his detention, the accused was transferred to the Detention Unit of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) on 14 June 2002. Darko Mrda, nicknamed "Dado", was born on 28 June 1967 in Zagreb, Croatia.

The Indictment, dated 16 April 2002 and unsealed on 14 June 2002, alleges that in the spring of 1992, an armed conflict broke out in north-western Bosnia, including the municipalities of Prijedor and Skender Vakuf. Widespread and systematic attacks were carried out by Bosnian Serb forces under the leadership of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) on the civilian population of this region. Non-Serb civilians were detained in various facilities, including the Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje camps in Prijedor municipality.

According to the Indictment, on 21 August 1992, a group of non-Serb prisoners detained in Trnopolje camp were told that they would be "exchanged", and transported by bus to Travnik. That same day, in the village of Tukovi, perhaps more than 1,000 civilian men, women and children were also told that a convoy would be organized to Travnik.

It is alleged that the two groups of buses from Trnopolje and Tukovi joined into one convoy and proceeded in the direction of Travnik. The convoy was accompanied by police or soldiers including Darko Mrda throughout the whole journey. The convoy passed the town of Skender Vakuf and drove over the Vlašić Mountain where they stopped in a wooded area. Darko Mrda ordered and participated in the separation of a group of military-aged non-Serb men. The women, children and elderly continued on to Travnik. The non-Serb men who had been separated were ordered into two buses and were driven to a location called Korićanske Stijene, where there is a sheer rock face on one side of the road and a steep cliff on the other. Prisoners were ordered to leave one bus and to kneel at the edge of the cliff. At that point Darko Mrda is alleged to have said, "*Here is where we do the exchange, the living for the living, and the dead...*" The police then began firing their guns at the men. Prisoners from the other bus were then brought off the bus in smaller groups and shot at the edge of the cliff. Witnesses estimate that more than 200 men were killed by the shots or the fall, although the exact number that died is unknown. Twelve men are known to have survived.

According to the Indictment, Darko Mrda, in command of a special police unit, "*acting in concert with others who shared his intent, planned instigated, ordered, committed, or otherwise aided and abetted the planning, preparation, or execution of the killing of over two hundred men*".

Charges

The Indictment charges Darko Mrda on the basis of his individual criminal responsibility (Article 7(1) of the Statute) with:

- Two counts of crimes against humanity (Article 5 of the Statute – extermination; inhumane acts), and
- One count of violations of the laws or customs of war (Article 3 of the Statute – murder)

The initial appearance of Darko Mrda will be announced in due course.

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